



Bill Richardson
Governor

Rhonda Faught
Transportation Secretary

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Governor Richardson Announces Signing of Historic Agreement to Operate Commuter Rail in New Mexico

Albuquerque, N.M. – Gov. Bill Richardson today announced the signing of a historic agreement with Burlington Northern Santa Fe that allows the operation of the New Mexico Rail Runner Express commuter trains between Belen and Bernalillo this year and extending the service into Santa Fe by 2008.

“The agreements being signed today and the impressive rail cars and locomotives behind me are proof that it will not be long before this service will be operating and will change the face of transportation in New Mexico forever,” Richardson said during an agreement signing ceremony. “This is a well-thought-out and responsible plan that will benefit New Mexico in the long run.”

The BNSF agreement with the New Mexico Department of Transportation is structured in three phases that involve the purchase of nearly 300-miles of rail line from Belen, N.M., to Trinidad, Colo., for \$75 million.

Phase One involves the \$50 million purchase of 51 miles of mainline track between Belen and Bernalillo. This agreement will go into effect Jan. 10, 2006. Phase Two involves the purchase of 48 miles of mainline track between Bernalillo and Lamy, N.M., at the cost of \$20 million. The agreement will go into effect Jan. 10, 2007. Phase Three involves the purchase of 200 miles of mainline track between Lamy, N.M., and Trinidad, Colo., at the cost of \$5 million. The agreement will go into effect Jan. 10, 2008.

Transportation Secretary Rhonda Faught said the purchase of the extra 200 miles of track between Lamy and Trinidad because necessary to close the deal with BNSF. “We believe the purchase of this section of track is sound and is a good investment for future transportation uses.”

The tracks the department will purchase from BNSF, formerly known as Burlington Northern Santa Fe, are in excellent condition and have a Class 4 rating that allows locomotives to travel at speeds of up to 79 mph.

“This purchase is in the best interest of New Mexico,” said Lawrence Rael, executive director of the Mid-Region Council of Governments. “It provides a multi-purpose asset that will serve communities in the heart of New Mexico well into the future. We’re making tremendous

progress on the Rail Runner project. In fact, work has already begun on some of the stations along the corridor. With today's agreement, we are able to move more rapidly toward commuter rail becoming a reality here in the state by early next year."

The department has \$300 million in Governor Richardson's Investment Partnership (GRIP) money for the commuter project. The state spent \$75 million to buy 10 passenger cars and five locomotives for the Belen to Bernalillo leg, which has nine stations.

Taxpayers will not have to pay to maintain the track between Lamy and Trinidad, which will be maintained by BNSF for the next two years. The state also has Federal Congestion Mitigation Air Quality funds to pay for the operation of the Belen to Bernalillo commuter system for the first three years.

"Commuter rail will provide an alternative form of travel for residents who are faced with rising gas prices," Faught said. "It will also create another means of transporting goods between this state and Mexico."

GRIP is a \$1.6 billion transportation package aimed at creating alternative means of transportation and improving state highways while simultaneously creating local jobs.

For more information, call S.U. Mahesh at (505) 490-0976.